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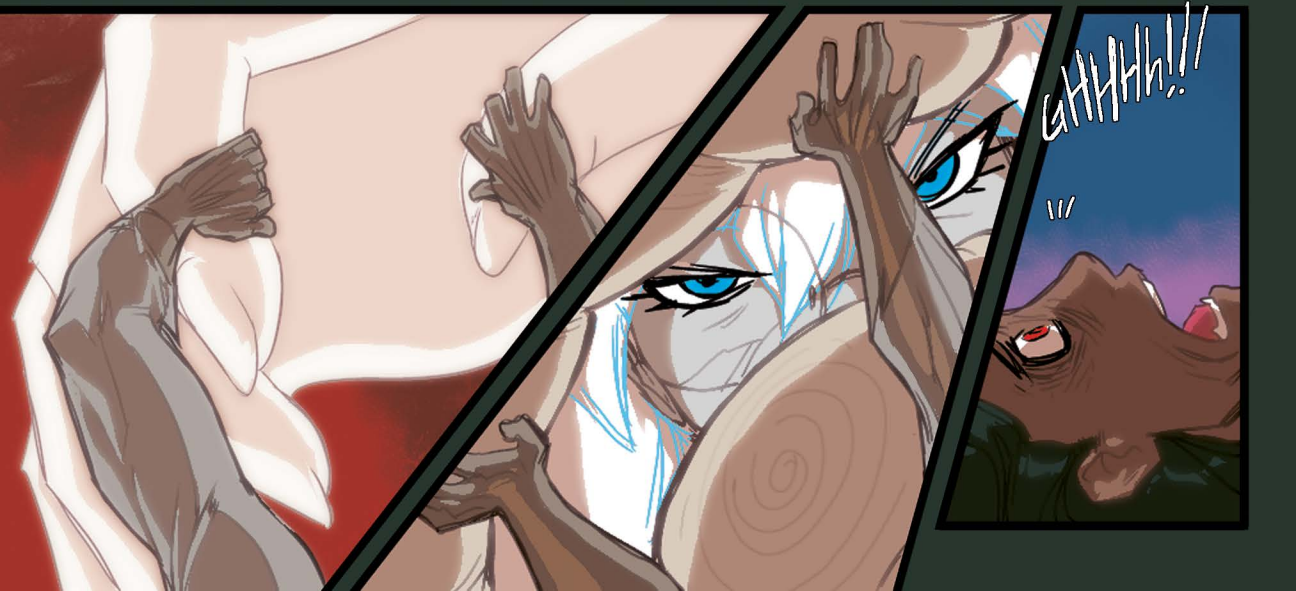
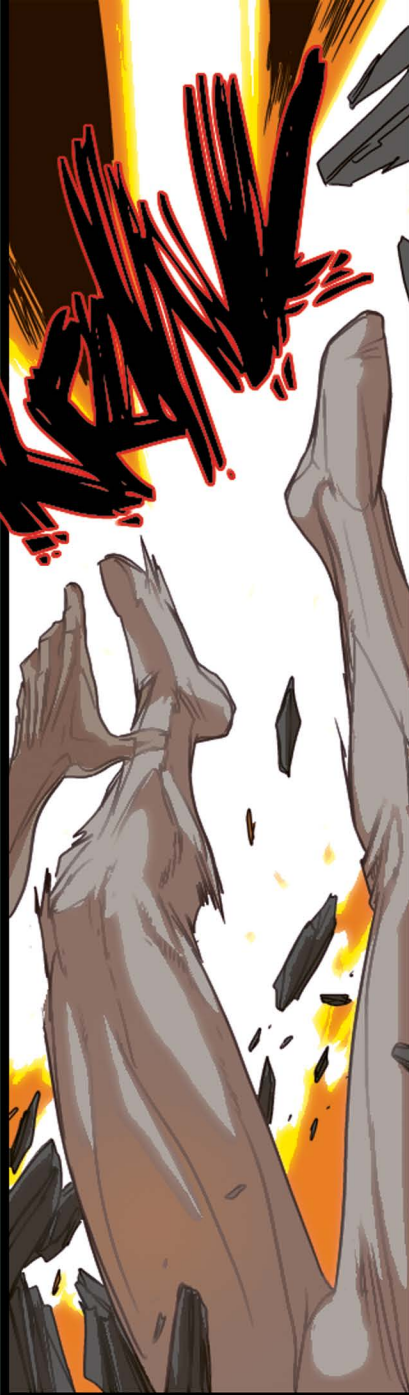
FRED PERRY

# GOLD DIGGER



APRIL 2012







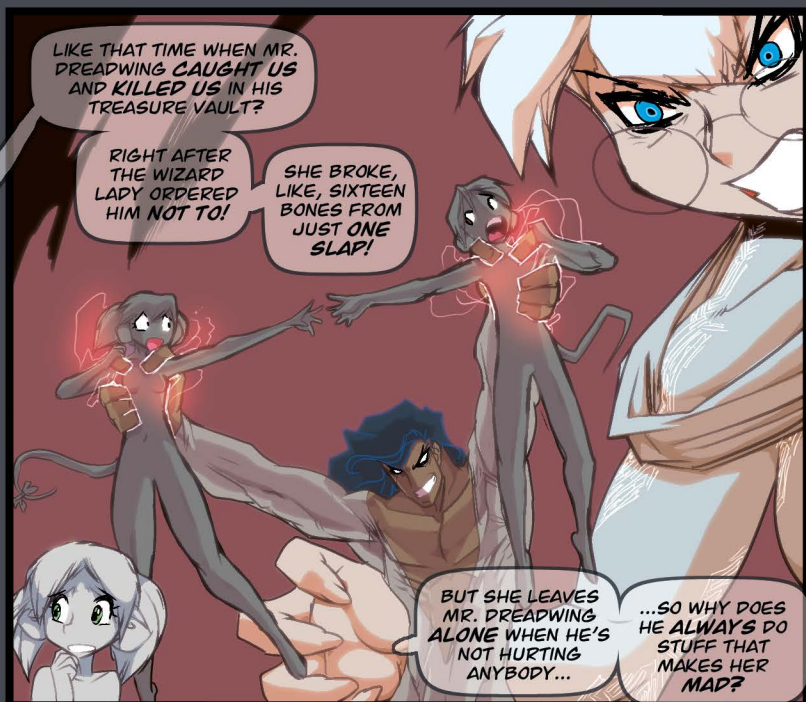




MYNNY!  
SHHH!!!  
GET BACK  
IN HERE!

BUT IT'S  
TRUE,  
MIK!!!!

EVERY TIME MR.  
DREADWING HURTS  
SOMEBODY, HE MAKES  
THAT OLD WIZARD LADY  
REALLY, REALLY  
MAD AT HIM!!!



LIKE THAT TIME WHEN MR.  
DREADWING CAUGHT US  
AND KILLED US IN HIS  
TREASURE VAULT?

RIGHT AFTER  
THE WIZARD  
LADY ORDERED  
HIM NOT TO!

SHE BROKE,  
LIKE, SIXTEEN  
BONES FROM  
JUST ONE  
SLAP!

BUT SHE LEAVES  
MR. DREADWING  
ALONE WHEN HE'S  
NOT HURTING  
ANYBODY...

...SO WHY DOES  
HE ALWAYS DO  
STUFF THAT  
MAKES HER  
MAD?



YOU DARE!?!  
AND WHO PUTS TO  
RIGHT THE WRONG  
THAT WAS DONE  
UNTO ME!?

WHO PLEADS TO THE  
ANCIENT ONE FOR MY  
FREEDOM AND  
DIGNITY!!!

NO ONE...  
WE ARE ALL  
SLAVES HERE.



THE ANCIENT ONE NEEDS  
MY ABILITIES TO KILL THE  
CRAWLING HORROR NOW  
WELLING UP FROM THE  
DAWN OF TIME.

SO SHE  
SEIZED ME.

I NEED YOUR  
ABILITIES TO KILL  
THE ANCIENT ONE  
ONCE SHE SAVES  
OUR LITTLE  
BUBBLE OF  
EXISTENCE.

SO I  
SEIZED  
YOU.







WE WILL ONLY  
REQUIRE THE MAGI  
TO MOP UP THE  
PALTRY ARMIES  
THAT REMAIN...

...AFTER I  
COLLECT THE  
NEW SLAVES  
I'VE SCOUTED.

BECAUSE  
ONCE I'VE  
LOOSED  
THOSE  
SLAVES  
UPON  
JADE...

...THE ENTIRE  
REALM WILL  
FALL APART  
AT THE  
SEAMS!

RULERS.

EXECUTIVES.

STEWARDS OF  
YOUR PEOPLES.

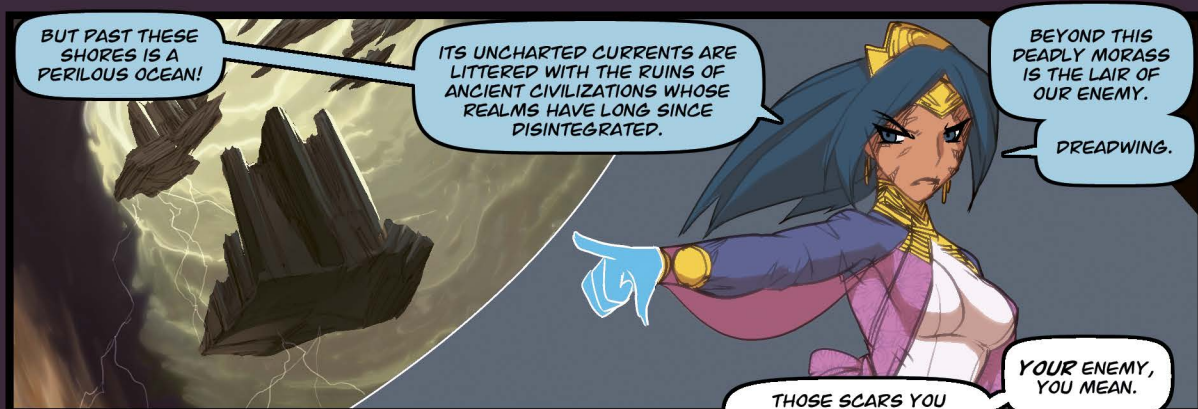
ALLOW ME TO  
INTRODUCE TO YOU  
THE PASSAGE FROM  
WHICH OUR DOOM  
APPROACHES.

THIS IS A MAP OF  
THE ASTRAL RIFTS  
WHERE IT TOUCHES  
OUR HOME...

OUR REALM  
OF JADE.

OUR PLANE'S  
INFLUENCE COLORS  
THIS REGION OF THE  
RIFT AND MAKES IT A  
GENTLE ATOLL.





BUT PAST THESE SHORES IS A PERILOUS OCEAN!

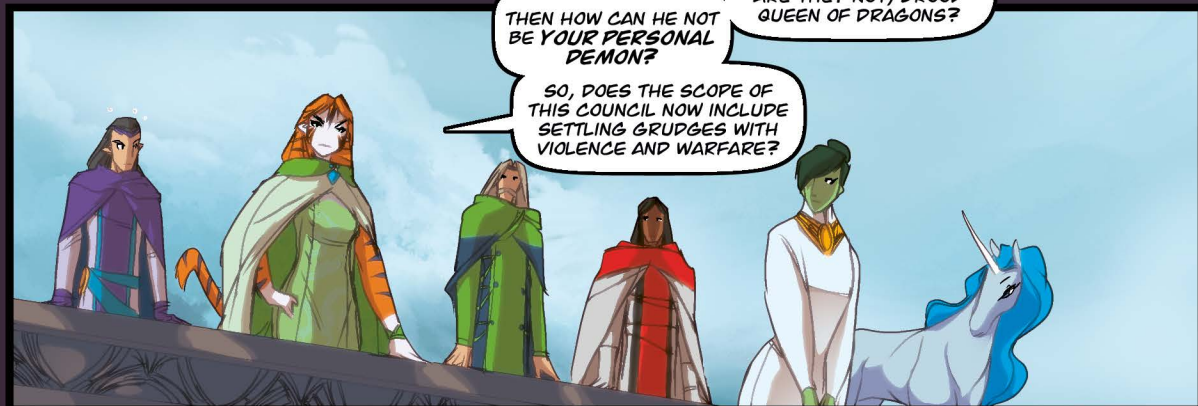
ITS UNCHARTED CURRENTS ARE LITTERED WITH THE RUINS OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS WHOSE REALMS HAVE LONG SINCE DISINTEGRATED.

BEYOND THIS DEADLY MORASS IS THE LAIR OF OUR ENEMY.

DREADWING.

YOUR ENEMY, YOU MEAN.

THOSE SCARS YOU WEAR ARE HIS WORK, ARE THEY NOT, BROOD QUEEN OF DRAGONS?



THEN HOW CAN HE NOT BE YOUR PERSONAL DEMON?

SO, DOES THE SCOPE OF THIS COUNCIL NOW INCLUDE SETTLING GRUDGES WITH VIOLENCE AND WARFARE?



I WOULD THINK...

...THE THREAT TO OUR HOME FROM A LEGENDARY DRAGON MASS-MURDERER...

...WOULD BE OF EVERYONE'S CONCERN, COUNCILOR XERCIE.

AND YOU PROPOSE THAT THE REST OF US BECOME YOUR FODDER IN THE CONFLICT TO COME?

HOW OFTEN HAVE DRAGONS COME TO THE AID OF MY PEOPLE WHEN WE NEEDED IT MOST, T'MAT?

OH, SURELY, YOU SEND FINANCIAL AID AFTER ALL HAS SETTLED...

...BUT ALL OF THOSE PENNIES HAVE STRINGS ATTACHED.



PERHAPS WE'LL FOLLOW YOUR EXAMPLE AND SEND PENNIES AFTER YOUR STRUGGLES.

AS POWERFUL AS WE ARE, MY PEOPLE ARE NOT UBIQUITOUS.

INDEED, WE ARE FEW.

YOUR TROUBLES WERE LIKE A WILDFIRE ACROSS A VAST FOREST.

IN THE FACE OF SUCH, EVEN THE MIGHTIEST OF DRUID CONCLAVES, WHILE PRESERVING AS MUCH LIFE AS POSSIBLE, RESIGN TO LETTING SUCH FIRES BURN THEMSELVES OUT.

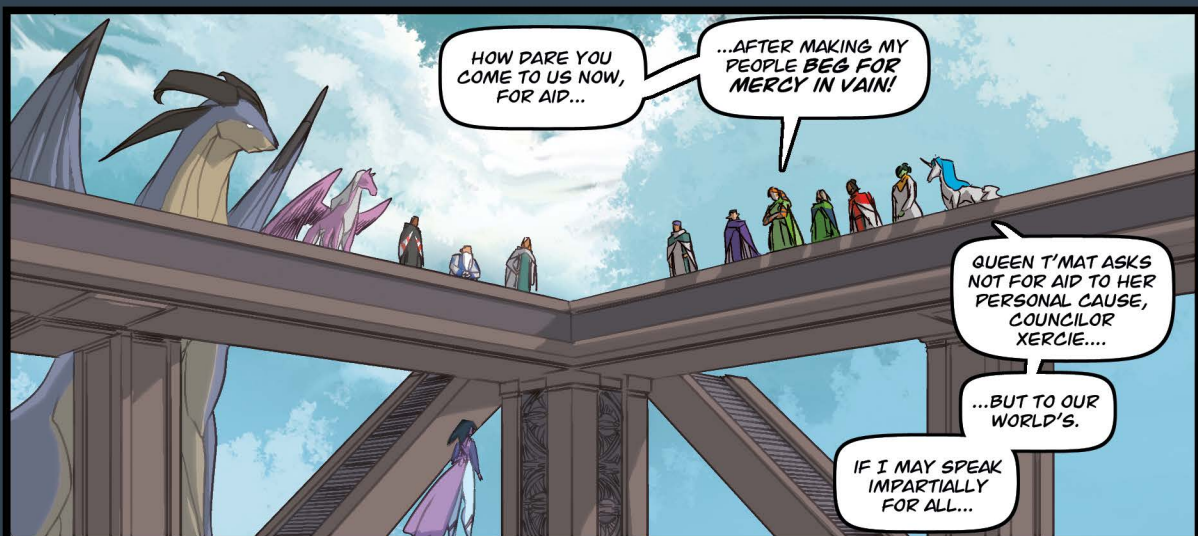




MY PARENTS DIED  
IN THAT "INFERNO"  
QUEEN T'MAT...

...OVER THIRTY  
YEARS AGO, DURING  
THE RAMPAGE OF THE  
ORKRIST AND THEIR  
MANIACAL OVERLORD!

AND WHILE  
**SERPENTUS** FANNED  
THE WAR FLAMES, YOU  
DRAGONS **ROASTED  
MARSHMALLOWS**  
OVER THE COALS!



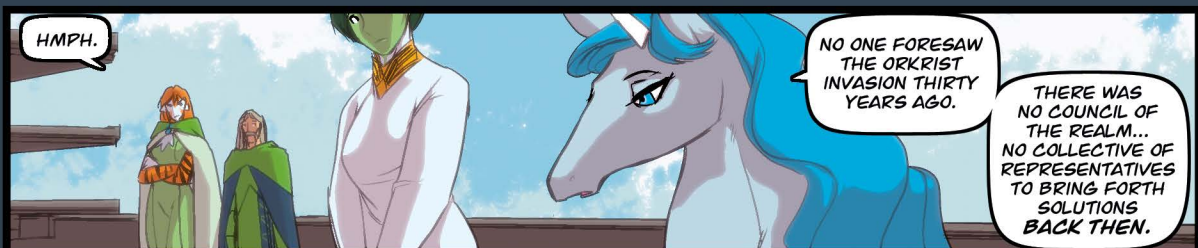
HOW DARE YOU  
COME TO US NOW,  
FOR AID...

...AFTER MAKING MY  
PEOPLE **BEG FOR  
MERCY** IN VAIN!

QUEEN T'MAT ASKS  
NOT FOR AID TO HER  
PERSONAL CAUSE,  
COUNCILOR  
XERCIE....

...BUT TO OUR  
WORLD'S.

IF I MAY SPEAK  
IMPARTIALLY  
FOR ALL...



HMPH.

NO ONE FORESAW  
THE ORKRIST  
INVASION THIRTY  
YEARS AGO.

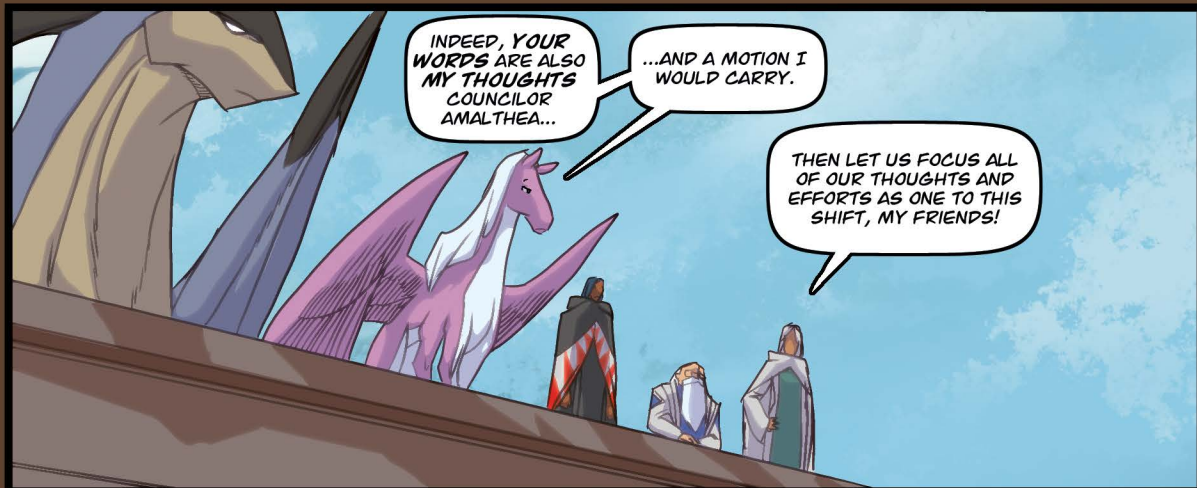
THERE WAS  
NO COUNCIL OF  
THE REALM...  
NO COLLECTIVE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES  
TO BRING FORTH  
SOLUTIONS  
BACK THEN.



TODAY, WE HAVE BOTH WARNING  
AND STRENGTH ENOUGH TO  
INTERCEPT THIS NEW THREAT.

WHY ARE WE HERE IF  
WE DO NOT HEED THIS  
WARNING AND SPEND  
OUR RESOURCES  
WISELY AGAINST IT?





INDEED, YOUR  
WORDS ARE ALSO  
MY THOUGHTS  
COUNCILOR  
AMALTHEA...

...AND A MOTION I  
WOULD CARRY.

THEN LET US FOCUS ALL  
OF OUR THOUGHTS AND  
EFFORTS AS ONE TO THIS  
SHIFT, MY FRIENDS!



LET US TOGETHER  
TRIUMPH OVER THIS  
EVIL IN ITS LAIR,  
BEFORE IT SLITHERS  
ONTO OUR PLANAR  
SHORES!

...

VERY WELL...IF  
THIS BE THE WILL  
OF THE COUNCIL...  
JAG'S LAIR WILL  
SEE IT DONE.



SHEEP.

ALL OF THEM.

THEY'RE CORRALED  
BY THE SPELLCRAFT  
OF T'MAT AND HER  
COMMONWEAL.



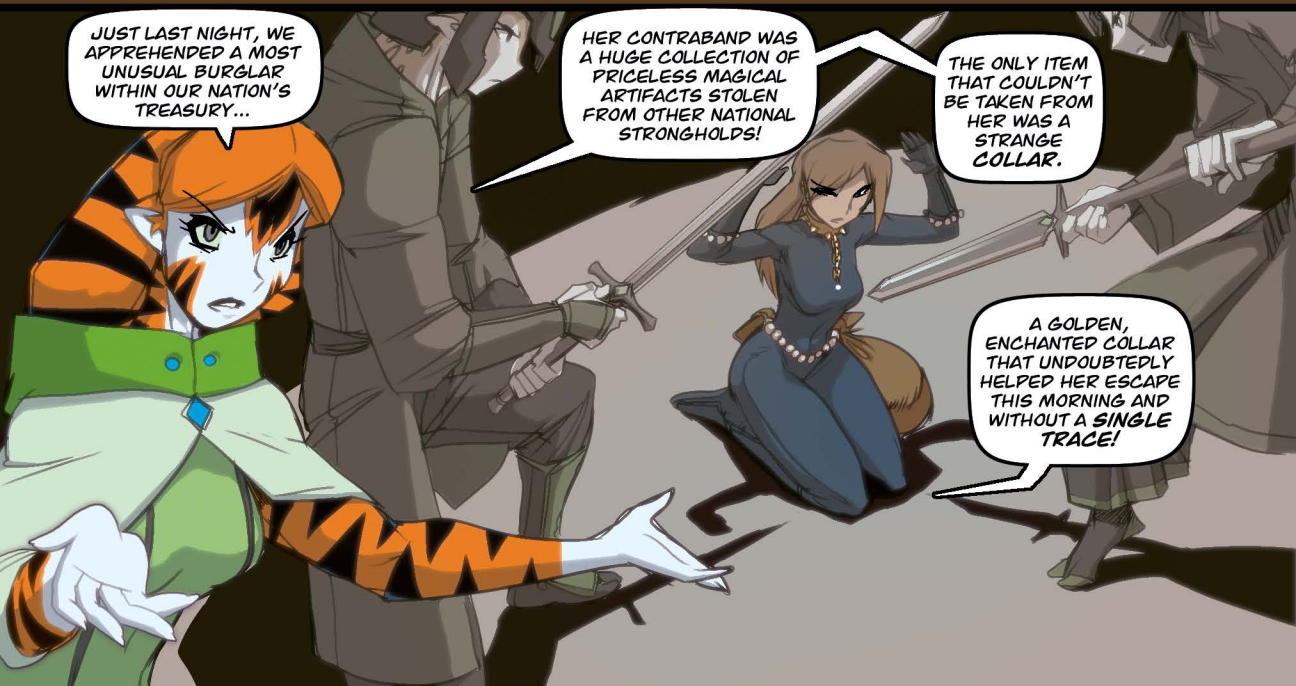
LET US DEPART  
FROM THIS PLACE,  
MAGISTER.

TRANSPORT US  
TO MY PRIVATE  
CHAMBERS.

I HAVE AN  
APPOINTMENT  
TO KEEP.

APPOINTMENT,  
MY LADY?







ONE OF THE ARTIFACTS  
THE THIEF LEFT BEHIND  
WAS OF SPECIAL  
SIGNIFICANCE...

...AS IT SMELLS  
OF DRAGON AND  
TREACHERY!



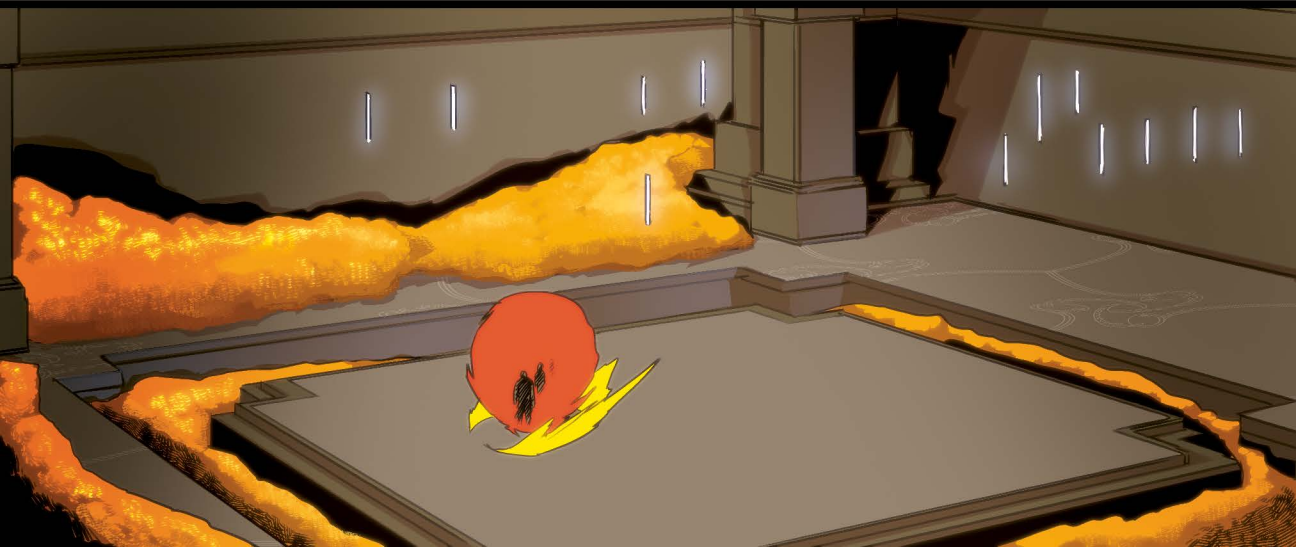
HERE.

OBSERVES THE  
PORTAL IT  
CREATES...

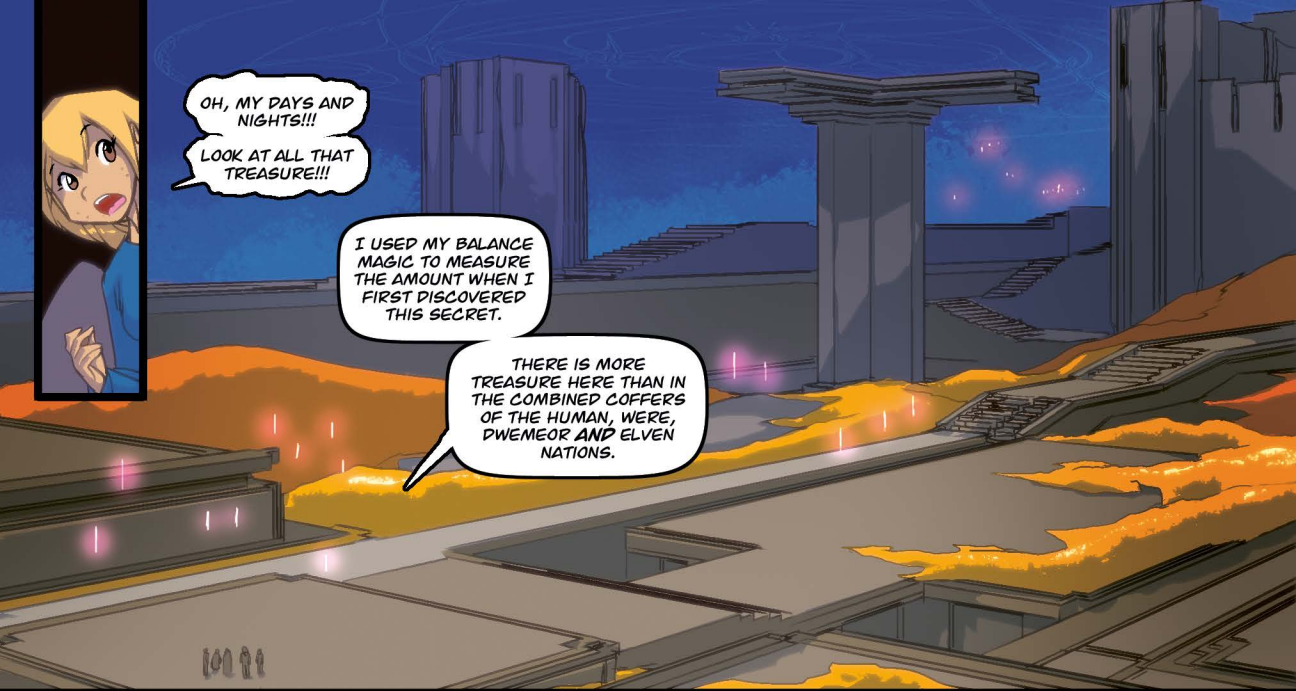


...THEN,  
ENTER...

...AND SEE FOR  
YOURSELVES!





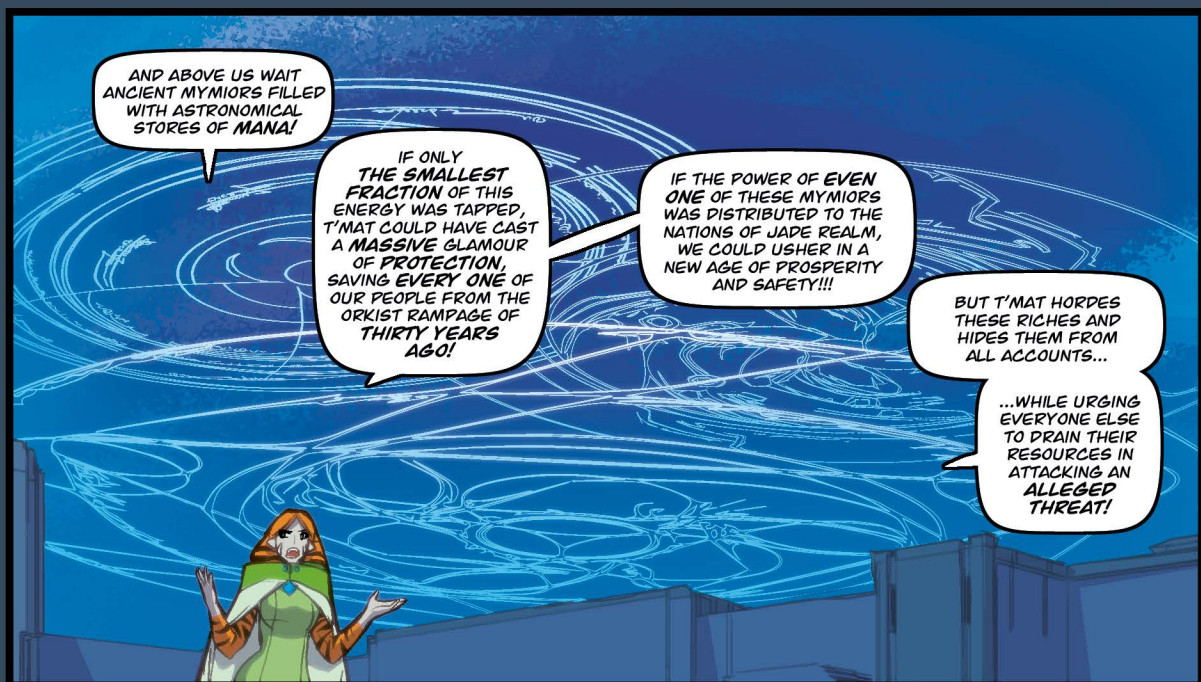


OH, MY DAYS AND NIGHTS!!!

LOOK AT ALL THAT TREASURE!!!

I USED MY BALANCE MAGIC TO MEASURE THE AMOUNT WHEN I FIRST DISCOVERED THIS SECRET.

THERE IS MORE TREASURE HERE THAN IN THE COMBINED COFFERS OF THE HUMAN, WERE, DWEMEOUR AND ELVEN NATIONS.



AND ABOVE US WAIT ANCIENT MYMIORS FILLED WITH ASTRONOMICAL STORES OF MANA!

IF ONLY THE SMALLEST FRACTION OF THIS ENERGY WAS TAPPED, T'MAT COULD HAVE CAST A MASSIVE GLAMOUR OF PROTECTION, SAVING EVERY ONE OF OUR PEOPLE FROM THE ORKIST RAMPAGE OF THIRTY YEARS AGO!

IF THE POWER OF EVEN ONE OF THESE MYMIORS WAS DISTRIBUTED TO THE NATIONS OF JADE REALM, WE COULD USHER IN A NEW AGE OF PROSPERITY AND SAFETY!!!

BUT T'MAT HORDS THESE RICHES AND HIDES THEM FROM ALL ACCOUNTS...

...WHILE URGING EVERYONE ELSE TO DRAIN THEIR RESOURCES IN ATTACKING AN ALLEGED THREAT!



HOW DARE SHE--

COUNCILOR! I UNDERSTAND YOUR EXIGENCY...

...AND THOUGH OLFACTORY EVIDENCE PANTS THIS LAIR AS ONE BELONGING TO A POWERFUL, ELDER DRAGON...



...MY INTUITION TELLS ME THAT BROOD QUEEN T'MAT HAS ABSOLUTELY NO KNOWLEDGE OF THIS PLACE!

IN FACT...

...I DON'T THINK ANY DRAGON OF JADE-REALM HAS!





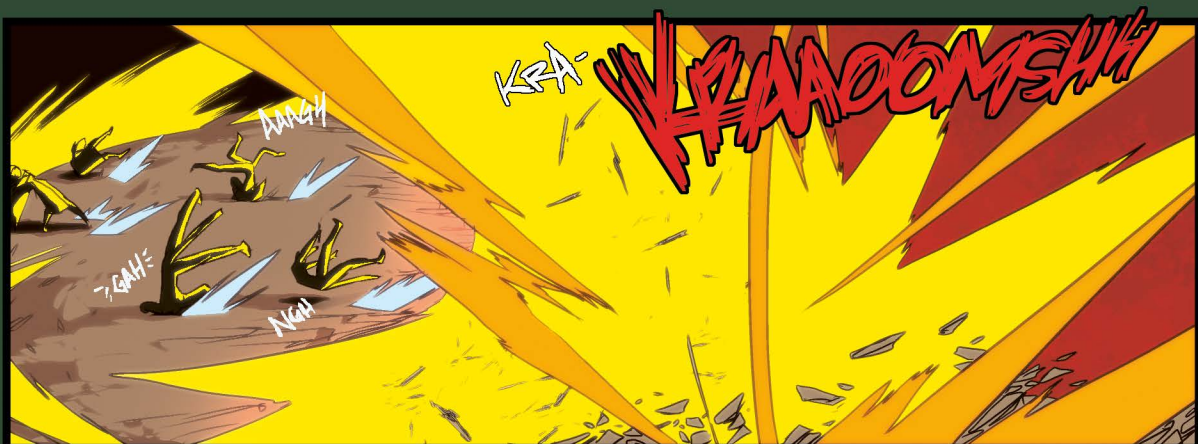






THROPAN!  
CALANDRA!!  
EVERYBODY!!!

CROSS-COUNTER  
THAT ATTACK!!!







THERE...



...NOW THAT  
WE'VE SAID OUR  
"HELLOS"...



...LET'S GET TO THE  
MATTER OF WHY I  
INVITED YOU HERE,  
COUNCILOR XERCIE!

I'VE A  
PROPOSITION  
YOU'LL FIND MOST  
LUCRATIVE, I  
ASSURE YOU!



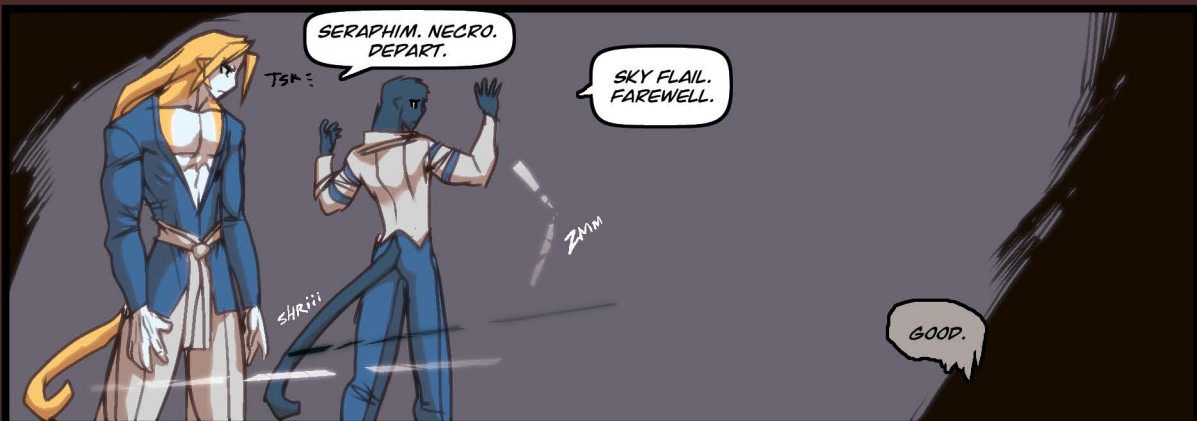




CALANDRA!!!









N-NAAN!

NAAN!  
GET UP!

YOU'VE GOT TO  
GET US OUT OF  
HERE!!!

SO YOU WISH TO  
LEAVE SO SOON,  
MADAME  
COUNCILOR...

...WITHOUT  
HEARING MY  
PROPOSAL?



THE LAST TIME YOU  
VISITED MY LAIR, YOU  
AND YOUR SERVANT  
WERE TOO SKITTISH  
FOR ME TO  
APPROACH .

YOUR SERVANT  
STOOD READY TO  
YANK YOU BOTH  
BACK HOME WITH  
"RECALL" AT EVEN  
THE SLIGHTEST  
DISTURBANCE.



TODAY, WITH  
THESE EXPERTS  
AT YOUR SIDE,  
YOU WERE BOLD  
ENOUGH TO STEP  
WITHIN MY  
REACH.

BUT  
FEAR  
NOT.

I ONLY  
REQUEST OF  
YOU A BRIEF  
AUDIENCE!

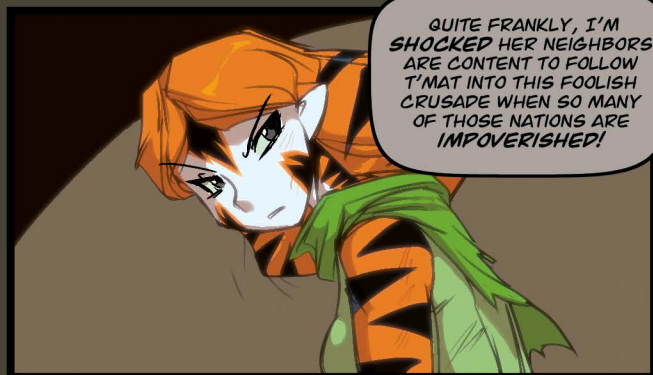
W-WHAT DO  
YOU WANT  
FROM ME?



I WANT YOUR UNDERSTANDING, COUNCILOR.

YOU SEE...MY CONFLICT IS WITH THE UNDERCITY SHADOW ELVES AND THE ROYAL COURT OF BROOD QUEEN T'MAT.

NOT THE NEIGHBORING CIVILIZATIONS T'MAT PLANS TO DRAG INTO THIS FIGHT.



QUITE FRANKLY, I'M SHOCKED HER NEIGHBORS ARE CONTENT TO FOLLOW T'MAT INTO THIS FOOLISH CRUSADE WHEN SO MANY OF THOSE NATIONS ARE IMPOVERISHED!



SOME OF THOSE COMMUNITIES HAVE BARELY ENOUGH RESOURCES TO HEAL WOUNDS INFLICTED TO THEIR PEOPLE'S COMMONWEALTH OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO.



AND I WOULD THINK T'MAT WOULD SPEND A JUST **SMALL PORTION** OF HER VAST WEALTH ON HELPING HER ALLIES.

IT IS A **HEARTLESS WARMONGER** WHO DOES NOT FIRST SEE TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE SICKLY, MALNOURISHED NEIGHBORS SHE INTENDS TO CONSCRIPT!

...WOULDN'T YOU SAY?



I-I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO, DREADWING!

YOU'RE TRYING TO TURN ME TO YOUR CAUSE!!!

TO SET ME AGAINST MY ALLIES!



COUNCILOR XERCIE...

...LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT A **TRUE ALLY** WOULD DO FOR YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE.



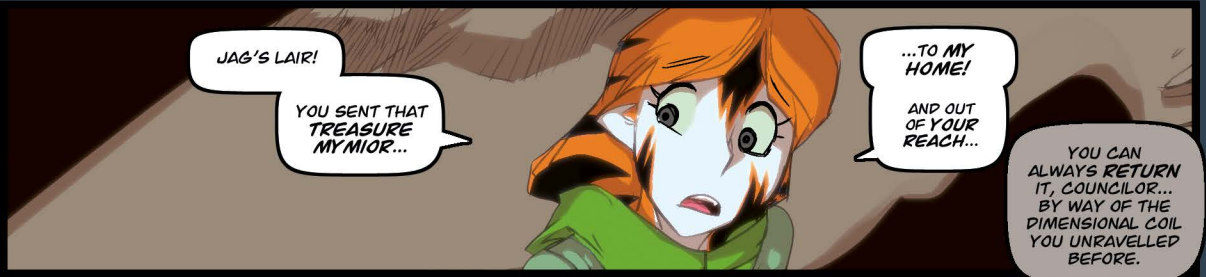
THE TREASURE MYMIORS!

YOU'RE  
MOVING  
THEM!?!

ONE OF  
THEM, YES.

AS BALANCE COUNCILOR  
OF YOUR CONTINENTAL  
MAGE-POCKET, YOU  
SHOULD BE ATTUNED TO  
YOUR HOME'S ASTRAL  
BALANCE...

...EVEN  
FROM HERE!



JAG'S LAIR!

YOU SENT THAT  
TREASURE  
MYMIOR...

...TO MY  
HOME!

AND OUT  
OF YOUR  
REACH...

YOU CAN  
ALWAYS RETURN  
IT, COUNCILOR...  
BY WAY OF THE  
DIMENSIONAL COIL  
YOU UNRAVELLED  
BEFORE.



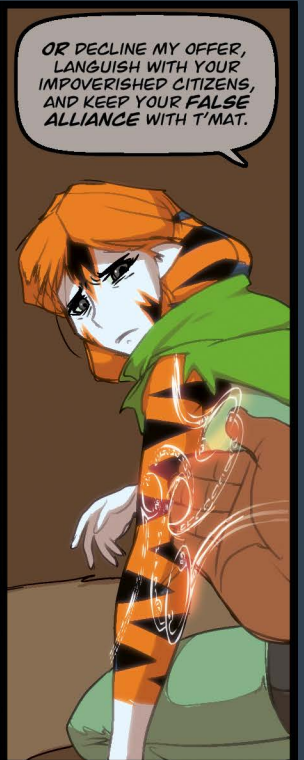
OR YOU MAY AGREE  
TO ASSIST ME ON A  
HUMANITARIAN  
PROJECT.

MY ALLIANCE WILL  
BE WITH YOU  
ALONE...

...I HAVE NO WISH  
TO INVOLVE  
YOUR PEOPLE.

AGREE TO AID  
ME, AND THIS **GEAS**  
ENCHANTMENT WILL  
PROVIDE YOU WITH  
THE KEY TO MY--  
YOUR MYMIOR.

USE IT TO HEAL YOUR  
COMMONWEALTH AND  
MAKE YOUR NATION  
STRONG AGAIN.



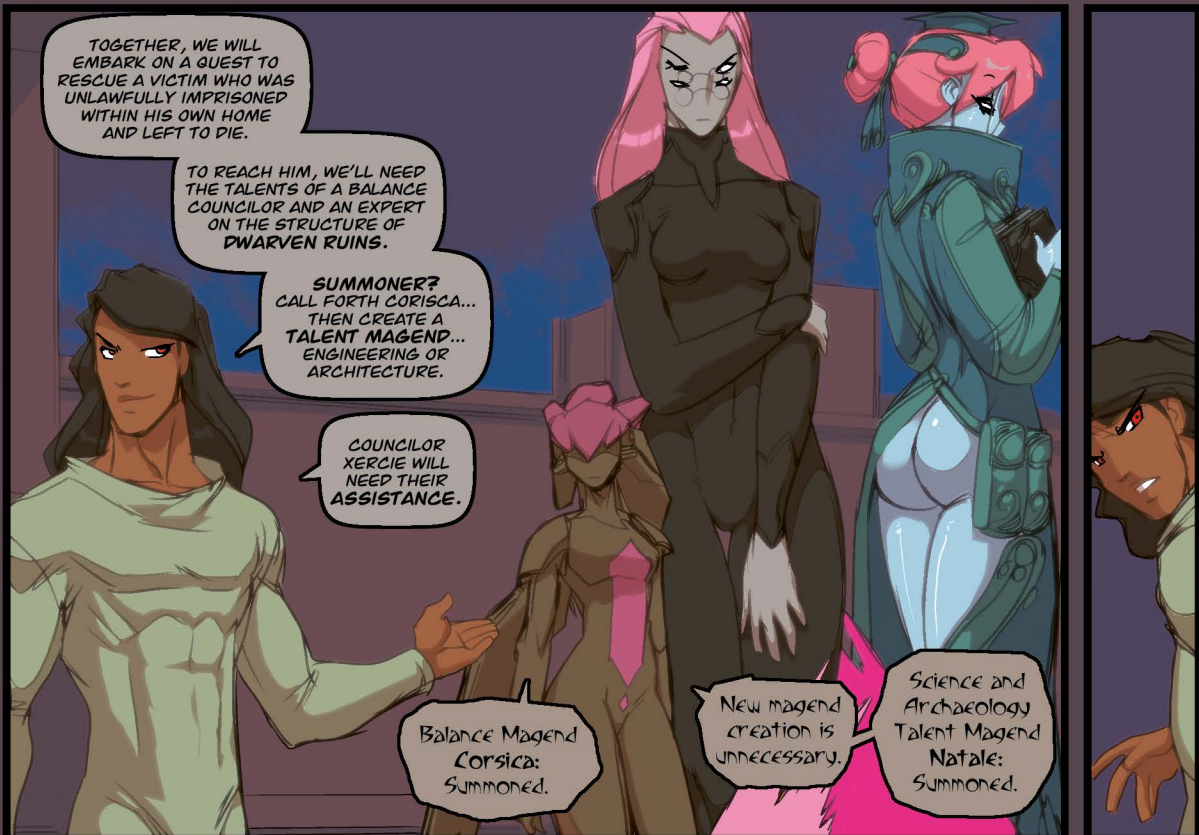
OR DECLINE MY OFFER,  
LANGUISH WITH YOUR  
IMPOVERISHED CITIZENS,  
AND KEEP YOUR FALSE  
ALLIANCE WITH T'MAT.





WHAT DO YOU BID  
OF ME, LORD  
DREADWING?

AS I STATED, THIS TASK  
IS HUMANITARIAN.



TOGETHER, WE WILL  
EMBARK ON A QUEST TO  
RESCUE A VICTIM WHO WAS  
UNLAWFULLY IMPRISONED  
WITHIN HIS OWN HOME  
AND LEFT TO DIE.

TO REACH HIM, WE'LL NEED  
THE TALENTS OF A BALANCE  
COUNCILOR AND AN EXPERT  
ON THE STRUCTURE OF  
DWARVEN RUINS.

SUMMONER?  
CALL FORTH CORISCA...  
THEN CREATE A  
TALENT MAGEND...  
ENGINEERING OR  
ARCHITECTURE.

COUNCILOR  
XERCIE WILL  
NEED THEIR  
ASSISTANCE.

Balance Magend  
Corsica:  
Summoned.

New magend  
creation is  
unnecessary.

Science and  
Archaeology  
Talent Magend  
Natale:  
Summoned.







OH.

COME TO THINK OF  
IT, I DO BELIEVE YOU'VE  
MET HIM BEFORE.



HE'S AN ORKIST  
VISIONARY WHO  
CALLS HIMSELF...  
SERPENTUS...

CONTINUED...